

Town of Lincoln

Budget Board Meeting

April 3, 2014

Present:

&#8203;Carl	Brunetti&#8203;&#8203;Mike
Babbitt&#8203;&#8203;Hagop	Jawharjian&#8203;&#8203;Bob
Turner&#8203;&#8203;	
&#8203;Bill	McManus&#8203;&#8203;Maria
Marcello&#8203;&#8203;Bill	DiBiasio&#8203;&#8203;&#8203;Rhonda
Lacombe	
&#8203;Paul DiDomenico&#8203;	Paul Deutsch

Absent:

​Richard Foster

Call to Order

The meeting began at 7:34 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of April 2nd were distributed for review.

Bill DiBiasio made a motion, seconded by Mike Babbitt to accept the minutes.

The minutes were accepted as amended by unanimous vote.

Correspondence

The Budget Board received information from the Superintendent regarding the status of surplus.

They also received additional information from Pare Engineering regarding the Ferguson Field renovation project.

Public Comment

There were no public comments or questions at the time.

Business

FY 15 Municipal Budget

The Town Administrator was present to discuss and answer questions about his recommended budget, specifically regarding tax levy estimates and the Hot Potato Schoolhouse Project.

The real name of the Hot Potato Schoolhouse is the Pullen's Corner School, and once it's moved it will be open at to the public for tours but will not be open 24 hours a day.

The Friends of the Hearthside have also expressed interest in having oversight of the building and would be in a better position to secure grant funding for it since they are an organization that caters to historical properties.

The Town Administrator distributed tax levy information and his resolution recommendations.

The Town is expecting to experience \$484,000 in tax levy growth with residential property taxes making up \$170,000 of that growth.

There are still 49 vehicles that were received without values from the state and have not priced, but without those the levy falls \$63,000 short of the estimated budget so the projection is that those 49 vehicles should be able to make up that difference.

The Town Administrator will work on the tax rates that would result from his budget recommendations and will provide that to the Budget Board for informational purposes as they deliberate.

The Police Department Addition project was discussed.

The Town Administrator noted that the project was committed to by taxpayers a year ago and that even though it did not go forward because the bids came in too high, since it was already approved it would not be appropriate if the Town changed the scope of work by now proposing a new building instead of an addition.

He believes that there would be many obstacles to building a new station, it would leave about 8,000 square feet of abandoned space that would still need renovation, and the state is looking to eventually consolidate and regionalize some police functions.

He feels that such a project could have been done in the past without a large impact to the Town but

in the coming years the Town will be up against things like school roof repairs, an unstable state finance outlook that will decrease gaming revenues and state education aid, necessary road repairs, and a new or renovated High School, that it would make it irresponsible to build a completely new Police Station at this point

when a study has said the current facilities are not adequate but an addition could remedy that.

While he appreciates the research and information that the Budget Board obtained in regards to a new police station project, he feels the best scenario would be the proposed addition which is adequate, has not received any opposition from the Police Chief, and could be done well without any additional money being borrowed against the Town.

The Budget Board has requested but not yet received an update on the Sewer Pump Station Upgrade Project.

The Town Administrator noted that the last station is going to be upgraded and they will all have been done with new parts, technology and bypasses installed which makes the process better when they overflow.

The \$2.9 collected in Sewer Fees has not all been spent, and the Town Administrator will send a copy of the detailed expenditures to the Budget Board.

The Budget Board reviewed and voted upon the dollar amounts of the Town Administrator's proposed Capital Resolutions as follows:

(This was for the amounts of the resolutions only, actual wording of the resolutions was to be determined and voted upon at a later time).

Pullen's Corner "Hot Potato" Schoolhouse

Bill DiBiasio made a motion, seconded by Paul DiDomenico to recommend the proposed resolution for vote at the Financial Town

Meeting for restoration and relocation of the Hot Potato Schoolhouse to Chase Farm in the amount of \$47,000 with \$22,000 of that coming from donations.

The Budget Board discussed that the Town is already squaring up the building to prepare it for the move, and that it is deteriorating at a rapid rate and would have to be moved now if ever.

Once the building is moved, it could improve the road conditions at its current location by widening the road and increasing visibility but the Budget Board discussed whether the building could be pushed back on the same property it's currently on to achieve that.

One of the merits of moving it to the Chase Farm location though is to create historical continuity.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

High School Campus Feasibility Study

Bill DiBiasio made a motion, seconded by Mike Babbitt, to recommend the proposed resolution for vote at the Financial Town Meeting for a Feasibility Study of the High School Campus in the amount of \$50,000.

The funds for the study would come out of the tax levy, and the Budget Board would also like the information from the Town Solicitor regarding school construction regulations.

The Budget Board discussed whether this study should be listed as an education resolution since the project is a requirement of the RI Department of Education but is paid for by municipal funds.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Police Station Addition

Bill DiBiasio made a motion, seconded by Mike Babbitt, to recommend the proposed resolution for vote at the Financial Town Meeting for an addition to the Police Station in the amount of \$3.1 million with \$2,450,000 coming from Fund 50, \$169,013 coming from Fund 12 and \$480,987 coming from Fund 56.

The Budget Board discussed that they believe the Town Administrator did explain well why the addition was sufficient and a new building is not needed and would harm the Town financially.

They noted that a new building would just be more maintenance and strain on the Town's resources and some departments within the Police Department will be moving out to merge and regionalize within 10 years as well.

In regards to that likely merger, the Budget Board discussed that if some police tasks do move to regionalize, they would have to pay a fee to the hosting City/Town for use of facilities.

The current resolution which was approved at last year's Financial Town Meeting was for \$1,928,000 for Phase I of a 6,600 square foot addition, it is now up with the new resolution to a total of \$4.2 million for a 4,300 square foot addition and renovations to the existing space, which means the scope of the resolution changed significantly.

Therefore, the Budget Board should be prepared to answer questions at the Financial Town Meeting and acknowledge that the previous

resolution/project did not work out so that is why this new project was designed differently.

The Budget Board discussed that while the Town is not near its bonding limit, it would not be able to borrow any more funds without increasing the tax rates.

While the Police Chief noted on the Town Facilities Tour that he was content with the proposed Police Station addition that it would be adequate, The Budget Board noted that the addition would not address issues with space for the rest of the Town Hall building.

The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Ferguson Field Renovations

Bill DiBiasio made a motion, seconded by Mike Babbitt, to recommend the proposed resolution for vote at the Financial Town Meeting for renovations of Ferguson Field in the amount of \$1.5 million.

The Budget Board discussed the concerns of the project expressed by Charlie Roberts and noted that according to a professional opinion, most of those would be addressed in the engineering phase at the beginning of the project.

The water in the storm water collection system from the field would have to be treated.

Wetlands approval is not needed for the project, but there is special

approval needed from RIPEDS because the project sits on more than an acre of land.

Based on the information the Budget Board has, it seems the proposed budget for the project seems accurate.

If this project funding is taken out of Fund 50 there would only be \$49,000 left in that account.

The Budget Board discussed that the wording of the resolution for this project should be specified so that it's clear that it is for the renovation of the field, track and scoreboard.

Per the RI Department of Education this project will not be eligible for reimbursement.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

With all resolutions amounts having been approved, the totals are as follows:

Municipal Resolutions: \$3,358,500

Education Resolutions: \$1,550,000

Total Resolutions: \$4,908,500

FY 15 Education Budget

The Budget Board discussed budget requests versus the average spent over the past 2 years.

Discussed Curriculum doubled – think is salaries

large increases in Business Operations 92% higher than 2 year average

and Fixed Charges 25% 4 mill up over 2 year average

The Budget Board discussed an increase in Salaries in Business Operations for 5 positions of \$120,000 which is an increase of \$373,000 over the 2-year average for all salaries.

They noted that that line actually includes Substitute Teachers so the increase is for 5.5 FTEs plus subs.

In Fixed Charges, Negotiations have increased because it will be a contract negotiation year.

Holding Account - Self Insured Medical is an increase of \$970,000 over the 2-year budgeted average but that line is currently \$700,000 short according to estimates for the current year.

Holding Account for Pensions is a 32% increase over the 2-year average.

This is the new defined contribution plan, and is based on a rate assigned by the state which takes into account all communities as dictated by the General Assembly.

There is also a separate Holding Account for the Town Non-Union Pensions, which the Budget Board was comfortable with.

Holding Account, Other Purchased Professional Education has a 2-year average spent of \$80,000 with a request of \$500,000 but that could be due to a change made in where things are charged because of the new Uniform Chart of Accounts.

For Charter Schools, the 2-year average spent is \$700,000 and the request is for \$1.7 million but that is because of an increase in enrollment which is shown when the amounts are multiplied by the cost per student.

The increased enrollment is because class availability increased.

In-State School Tuitions, which is for schools like Davies and not charter schools, had such a large increase because enrollment increased from 180 students to 216.

The Superintendent noted to the Budget Board that if there really is concern about the class sizes, especially at the early elementary level, the School Committee could look at redistricting and reallocating resources, and she pointed out that there is room to do so in particular at Northern where there are 8 available classrooms.

The Budget Board discussed that there will be open positions on the Board in the coming year.

Public Comment

There were no public comments or questions at the time.

Adjourn

Maria Marcello made a motion, seconded by Bob Turner, to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 10:10 pm.